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Concurrent Vegetation and Wildlife Mapping Assists Reclaimed Desired Plant Community (RDPC) Planning

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Cedar Creek has been implementing concurrent baseline biological and reclamation planning studies for multiple projects in Nevada to support permitting efforts, including the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA). Project sizes have ranged between 1,000 acres and over 200,000 acres. Cedar Creek designed a concurrent field data collection program that combines reclamation-specific data collection with multiple agency requirements for vegetation, grazing allotment, soil, and wildlife baseline assessment needs. The concurrent design reduces costs through concurrent data collection. Our design approach overlays Ecological Site Description data (ESDs) across topographical and elevational data, GAP wildlife habitat mapping, previous RDPC, and wildlife data to create field polygons in which to collect specific data. Field data is collected in a nested design to enable landscape-level characterization along with and finer-scale quantitative data. Reporting and other data presentation are organized and formatted to be used directly in permitting documents, creating consistency between permitting, operational and reclamation plans. We also found that wildlife presence/absence could be more precisely mapped using concurrently collected vegetation data. Merging biological baseline and reclamation characterization programs can benefit projects from permitting initiation through final closure.

Keywords: NEPA, RDPC, reclamation